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EDUCATION WEEK

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Roger W. Winstead

At least three states and two big school districts are considering dropping or shifting the cost of driver training in order to save money.

Driver-Education Programs Hit Fiscal Potholes

By Millicent Lawton

Long a popular fixture in the high-school curriculum, driver education is hitting a bumpy stretch of road in a number of places.

At least three states and two major metropolitan school districts currently are considering dropping or shifting the cost of driver training in order to save money.

The result, experts say, will be to force students to pay fees of $200 or more for a course that used to be free, or to encourage them to drive without proper training or even without a license.

In addition to budget-driven cutbacks, some jurisdictions are moving driver education from the instructional day to after-school hours or the summer, on the grounds that it no longer merits a spot in the regular curriculum.

But safety experts warned last week that the changes could lead to more accidents on the highways, as more students get behind the wheel without the grounding in traffic laws and good driving habits that a school program can provide.

Motor-vehicle accidents are the primary cause of death for U.S. teenagers—accounting for more than 14,000 deaths nationwide in 1988 among 15- to 24-year-olds.

By far the majority of teenagers depend on public schools for their training, said Charles Butler, manager of driver-safety services at the American Automobile Association's Florida headquarters.

Indeed, 15 states mandate completion of a driver-education course before a person under age 18 can obtain a license, according to the American Driver and Traffic Safety Education Association.

"Many more 16- and 17-year-olds are going to be driving untrained and illegally," because of shrinking programs, said John Harvey, president of the driver-education group. "We're just go-

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First State-Level Assessment Finds Wide Variations

But Math Performance Remains Low Overall

By Robert Rothman

WASHINGTON—The first-ever state-by-state assessment of student achievement has found that student performance in mathematics varies widely among states, but that performance in all states remains low.

The much-anticipated 1990 assessment, conducted by the National Assessment of Educational Progress, tested a national sample of students in grades 4, 8, and 12, and samples of 8th-grade public-school students in 37 states, the District of Columbia, and two territories.

It found that, nationwide, more than a quarter of the 4th graders failed to demonstrate the ability to perform simple arithmetic reasoning with whole numbers, and that, at later grades, the proportion of students showing the skills to perform more complex mathematical tasks declines sharply.

Only 5 percent of the high-school seniors demonstrated the skills needed for high-technology or college-level work, officials noted.

And the state-level data show that there

Continued on Page 23

Blacks' Assignment To Bilingual Classes In S.F. Is Criticized

By Peter Schmidt

The San Francisco Unified School District is changing the way it assigns children to bilingual-education classes in the wake of reports that hundreds of disadvantaged black students have been placed in such classes.

According to an analysis of elementary-school data, more than 750 black children were assigned to bilingual classes this year, many without parental consent, for the sake of integration.

The analysis, conducted by the *San Francisco Examiner*, also found that English-speaking black students were more than twice as likely as English-speaking whites to be assigned to the bilingual classes and that more than 80 percent of black students assigned to bilingual classes had tested below grade level.

School-district officials have confirmed the newspaper's findings.

The practices have stirred up a firestorm of criticism, led by a coalition of organizations representing African-Americans and language minorities.

District officials responded last week that students had been inappropriately placed in

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Short on Funding, Long on Vision, Black Churches Take on Education

By Jonathan Weisman

DETROIT—At the Church of the Messiah, not far from a neighborhood of burned-out and looted buildings on this city's East Side, the Rev. Ron Spann is proclaiming the birth of a movement.

Bolstered by the $125,000 raised by his development director last year, Mr. Spann now oversees a network of summer youth programs, tutoring and mentoring efforts, a youth athletic league, and free-lunch programs designed to reclaim the children of the ghetto, as well as a flourishing housing corporation that is rehabilitating the urban squalor into which those children were born.

"There is a movement that has come of age in this country," Mr. Spann said of the burst of social outreach and educational programs emanating from black and urban churches nationwide. "A lot of seeds sowed years ago are now coming of age."

Across town, at the Metropolitan Church of God, the Rev. Robert O. Dulin Jr. is less sure that those seeds are bearing fruit.

The computer laboratory he established for elementary-school students is now defunct. The vacant lot purchased by the church for a future building and to serve as a buffer against encroaching drug dealers will remain vacant for the forseeable future. There is no money for the community center he wants to build.

Hungry children knock on the church's door every week, but Mr. Dulin admits that the once-a-week free-lunch and parenting program he envisions is still very much a dream.

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Rebecca Cook

The Rev. Robert O. Dulin Jr., pastor at the Metropolitan Church of God, on a playground outside the Detroit church.

Goals Panel Begins To Select Measures For Its First Report

By Robert Rothman

WASHINGTON—A panel of governors and Bush Administration officials last week approved a set of measures to gauge progress toward the national goal of improved student achievement, but failed to agree on a way to measure whether students are ready for school.

The National Education Goals Panel also took the first steps toward developing a new national assessment system to monitor student achievement.

The panel announced that it has created a council of educators and public officials to determine if the panel should proceed in establishing national education standards

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Also in the news

11 **Stuffing the Ballot Box?** Residents of two small Iowa towns apparently will stop at nothing to capture a prized new elementary school.

IN SUMMARY

Jackson Bonds Pass
Jackson, Miss., voters last week approved the largest school-bond referendum in state history, and the first passed in the city since desegregation 21 years ago. **Page 4.**

To Pray or Not To Pray
Pending a Supreme Court decision next year, school officials from California to Massachusetts remain divided on whether to allow prayers at commencement services this year. **Page 5.**

Too Hot for School
School closings across the East Coast prompted by an unusually severe heat wave have reopened old questions about weather-related closing policies.
Page 5.

Educating Foster Children
The welfare and education systems in the United States have paid far too little attention to the education of children placed in foster care, experts on the issue say.
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Making Math Mandatory
Six school districts next fall will begin to require students to take algebra and geometry in an effort to raise college-going rates among disadvantaged students.
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Monitoring Spec.-Ed. Costs
The economic recession that is hitting state budgets hard is causing states to search for ways to control spending on expensive special-education programs.
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Linking Jobs and Test Scores
The Administration is backing changes to federal regulations that would allow employers to tie hiring and promotion decisions to educational attainment and aptitude-test scores. **Page 20.**

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ACROSS THE NATION

STATES

Loophole in Kentucky Reform Law Imperils Utility-Tax Increases

A Northern Kentucky circuit-court judge has voided a utility-tax increase imposed by the Campbell County school board, ruling that the state's 1990 education-reform law requires voter approval of such increases.

School officials said the section of the law cited by the judge is a loophole created by the state legislature, which intended to allow districts to raise property and utility tax rates without a referendum. But language in one section of the act makes all utility-tax increases subject to voter recall.

Officials said the ruling could signal budget trouble for several districts around the state that have already built increased utility-tax proceeds into next year's spending plans. Loss of the 3 percent tax will cost Campbell County officials about $400,000.

The state school-board association group has offered to help appeal the decision to a higher court, but observers noted that the decision may be more quickly reversed next year when the legislature convenes.

■ **The New York State Education Department has decided to destroy all copies of a state high-school examination after it accidentally mailed out answers to the test.**

A spokesman for the department said the error resulted in a significant breach in security for the state Regents exam in English, prompting the education department to destroy all copies of a version of the test that it had planned to distribute this month.

The department did not cancel the test, but provided schools with a substitute version that cost the state an additional $10,000, the spokesman said.

The breach in test security is presumed to have occurred as a result of a department employee's inadvertently putting the answer key for the high-school test inside boxes of 5th-grade writing tests mailed to elementary schools.

DISTRICTS

Atlanta High School Investigated For Alleged Athletic Violations

A high-school principal in Atlanta has been replaced and a community school director fired in the wake of a school-board investigation into charges of illegal recruiting, transcript tampering, and the "brokering" of high-school basketball players to colleges.

The district has removed Charles Hawk Jr. from his job as principal of Southside Comprehensive High School and fired Willie Fussell from his position as principal of Southside's night school.

The personnel moves were described by John Elger, the chairman of the board's investigating committee, as only the first of "many substantial personnel and policy recommendations."

Mr. Hawk is still employed by the school system, pending further developments in the investigation, Mr. Elger said. Mr. Fussell is appealing his dismissal.

According to Mr. Elger, officials of the National Collegiate Athletic Association warned the school district last fall that its investigation of a former Southside student-athlete indicated that the school may have violated N.C.A.A. recruitment regulations.

The student, Wayne Buckingham, is now a freshman at Clemson University. Last December, the N.C.A.A. told the school that Mr. Buckingham could not play for one year because he had not met certain academic requirements in high school.

Allegations include that Southside had employed inappropriate recruiting practices, that a student's transcript had been altered, and that players may have been given credit for classes they did not attend.

There were also questions about the finances of a community-based booster club, whose director receives a salary from the school system, Mr. Elger said.

No disciplinary actions are expected against students, Mr. Elger said.

David Berst, the N.C.A.A.'s executive director for enforcement, said he expects the investigation to continue "for some time," and he would not comment until the probe is completed.

■ **A girls' basketball player has sued the Duncanville (Tex.) Independent School District in federal court, charging that its tradition of religious practices at sporting events violates the First Amendment.**

The girl, named only as "Jane Doe" in the suit, is a member of the Duncanville High Pantherettes, according to her lawyer, Joseph Cook, executive director of the Dallas chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union.

The student has refused to kneel at center court with her teammates after games and to recite the Lord's Prayer, a tradition of the Pantherettes for more than 20 years. While the other players pray, the girl stands aside facing the spectators of the opposing team, Mr. Cook said.

In March, the A.C.L.U. warned the district that it must stop the prayers or face a lawsuit. When it did not respond, Mr. Cook said, the suit was filed.

According to the suit, prayers are also said during trips to and from games and during pep rallies and award ceremonies. Religious songs are also sung by school personnel, the suit charges.

■ **A Los Angeles elementary-school principal last week defeated a former teacher backed by United Teachers of Los Angeles for the seat on the Los Angeles school board being vacated by Rita Walters.**

Semiofficial results in the runoff election showed that Barbara Boudreaux defeated Sterling Delone, who had most recently worked as a field representative for Jackie Goldberg, the board's outgoing president, by a narrow margin.

Ms. Boudreaux's candidacy was backed by Associated Administrators of Los Angeles, a far less powerful political force than U.T.L.A.

Ms. Walters, meanwhile, also appeared to have won a seat on the Los Angeles City Council. But Julie Korenstein, another school-board member who ran for a council seat, was defeated.

■ **A school advisory committee in Santa Monica, Calif., inadvertently violated the state's open-meetings law when it used a private channel on a city-operated computer network to discuss school-board**

Heavy Into Music

From the Jasonville, Ind., high school that last year brought you the world's largest yo-yo, this year comes the world's biggest guitar.

More than 50 woodworking, metalworking, and drafting students from Shakamak High School worked together under the direction of their industrial-arts teacher, Jeff McNabb, to replicate the the Gibson Flying "V," a classic electric guitar. And they weren't afraid to think big.

How big?

So big that it has to be moved in three pieces and takes at least 20 students to haul the biggest piece. Or 38 feet, 2 inches long and 1,865 pounds, to be exact.

But to break the world record, the instrument had to play like a real guitar. So two weeks ago, at what was billed as "The World's Largest Guitar Show," 12 students—2 per string—entertained a packed house with hot renditions of "Smoke on the Water" and the theme from "Peter Gunn."

There was an amplifier apiece for each of the six strings, explains Kade Puckett, the 18-year-old guitarist, draftsman, and woodworker who guided the design of the guitar along with his brother Brandon. The strings also sustain indefinitely, leading to a sound akin to "a real loud bass guitar," Mr. Puckett says with pride.

Loel Barr

How loud?

"I saw a lot of old people holding their ears," Mr. Puckett recalls.

Mr. Puckett, who next fall will study classical and jazz composition in college, says that building the guitar was ultimately a lesson in problem-solving.

Although the guitar has received more attention, Mr. McNabb says he is even prouder of last year's yo-yo, because it enabled 16 students, most of whom were learning-disabled, to accomplish something big.

"We took kids who don't survive academically and gave them something to get excited about," he says. "Those kids worked through their lunch hour and after school. In my educational experience, I've never seen anything like it."

The yo-yo, 6 feet in diameter, can be seen at the Indianapolis Children's Museum, and the class is still working on finding a fitting home for the guitar. —W.M.

All States' Math Performance Low, Assessment Finds

Continued from Page 1

are large differences in performance among states. The gap between the highest-performing states and the lowest-performing ones—35 points on a 500-point scale—is larger than the gap between the national average scores for 8th graders and 12th graders, the report notes.

In examining possible explanations for performance, the study found that students who watch a great deal of television, who are absent often from school, and who come from single-parent families tend to do relatively poorly on the assessment.

It also found that, despite calls for reforming math instruction, most classrooms, particularly those with low-performing students, tend to rely on textbooks, worksheets, and frequent tests.

In addition, it states, there are wide differences in the content of math instruction, particularly in the 8th grade. At that level, high-performing students tend to receive instruction in algebra and functions, it found, while low-performers tend to be taught arithmetic operations.

Secretary of Education Lamar Alexander called the report the most comprehensive assessment ever conducted, and said it should sound an "alarm bell that should ring all night throughout this country."

"America is the country that grew up reading *The Little Engine That Could*," he said at a press conference here. "We believe we can do almost anything, and usually we can."

"But if our aim is to be first in the world in math by the year 2000," he continued, "we had better fire up our engines, because we have an enormous challenge ahead of us."

'A Better Way'

The massive volume of data issued last week—a 532-page overview report and separate reports for each of the 40 participating state-level jurisdictions—represents the most significant source of information on education the federal government has released since it published the so-called "Coleman report" in the 1960's, according to Emerson J. Elliott, acting commissioner of the National Center for Education Statistics.

"This is the first time in the history of the nation," he said, "that we have data on a common assessment conducted in a uniform manner, with representative samples of students state by state."

A Congressionally mandated project, NAEP has for more than 20 years tested national samples of students in reading, math, science, and other subjects. It is currently operated by the Educational Testing Service under contract to the Education Department.

The pilot state-level assessment came about, in part, because chief state school officers agreed in 1984, after long resistance, to permit state-by-state comparisons of student achievement, according to Richard A. Boyd, former state superintendent of education in Mississippi.

"That decision in November of 1984 was revolutionary," recalled Mr. Boyd, currently the chairman of NAEP's governing board, "because the prevailing sentiment at the time was not to display in public the strengths or weaknesses of schools in the various states."

The officials changed their minds, however, because "a majority of chiefs felt that their states were already being ranked by various people, usually in unfair ways, and that a better way had to be found," Mr. Boyd said. "I think a better way has been found."

Mr. Boyd noted, though, that Mississippi was among the 13 states that did not participate in the trial assessment. He said that the state had already planned to conduct an 8th-grade test in 1990, but that it could not use the NAEP assessment in its place because the law authorizing the assessment prohibits the use of NAEP data at the school or school-district level.

In addition to permitting the 1990 trial, the Congress also authorized a state-level assessment in 1992, in 4th- and 8th-grade math and in 4th-grade reading. Some 43 states, the District of Columbia, and one territory have agreed to participate in that project, according to Mr. Elliott.

Far From Reform Vision

To conduct the 1990 assessment, NAEP officials administered tests to 26,000 students in 1,300 public and private schools nationally and about 2,500 students in 100 public schools in each of the 40 participating states and territories.

> *"If our aim is to be first in the world in math by the year 2000, we had better fire up our engines, because we have an enormous challenge ahead of us."*
>
> —Secretary of Education Lamar Alexander

The test was based, in part, on the math-reform proposals advocated by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, and it represents a substantial departure from past NAEP math tests.

As a result, Mr. Elliott said, the reports issued last week did not show any trends in performance over time. But he said the Education Department this fall would release a study, based on a smaller sample, that compares student performance with that in prior NAEP studies.

The results of the assessment, according to the report, show "quite clearly and in some detail that mathematics education in our nation and in our states is far from the vision described in the recommendations for reform of what mathematics education could be."

Specifically, it notes, 72 percent of the 4th graders tested could solve simple addition and subtraction problems with whole numbers, concepts typically taught in the 3rd grade.

Although nearly all older students demonstrated competence on such problems, the report notes, fewer could perform more complex problems. For example, it states, two-thirds of the 8th graders could consistently multiply and divide whole numbers—usually 5th-grade math—and less than half the 12th-grade students demonstrated a "consistent grasp of decimals, percents, fractions, and simple algebra."

Moreover, it notes, only 5 percent of the high-school seniors showed an understanding of more advanced algebra and geometry that would prepare them for college-level work.

"We see diminishing returns in our educational efforts," said Gary W. Phillips, acting associate commissioner of the N.C.E.S.

Gender Gap in States

But while the overall results are relatively low, the report notes, there are considerable variations among groups of students and among states.

As in previous studies, Asians and Pacific Islanders and white students, those attending schools in advantaged urban areas, and those with well-educated parents were in the higher-performing groups, the study notes. Nevertheless, it states, even in the high-performing groups, only 10 percent to 12 percent of the high-school seniors demonstrated a readiness for advanced work.

The report also notes that the highest-performing states—North Dakota, Montana, Iowa, Nebraska, Minnesota, and Wisconsin—considerably outperformed the lowest-performers—Alabama, Hawaii, North Carolina, Louisiana, Guam, and the District of Columbia.

However, it points out, the differences from state to state were small, in many cases smaller than the margin of error. As a result, NAEP officials cautioned against ranking the states according to overall performance.

The high-performing states tended to have fewer students in large-city schools, fewer receiving free lunches, smaller percentages of blacks and Hispanics, and larger percentages of two-parent families, the study found.

While most of the 8th graders in all states demonstrated the ability to perform simple arithmetic operations, there were wide gaps in the proportions who could solve more complex problems. From 0 percent to 24 percent of 8th graders, for example, could solve problems involving fractions and decimals, material introduced in the 7th grade, the study found.

The study also found essentially no gender gap in math performance in the 4th and 8th grades, but it found a slight advantage for males in the 12th grade, particularly in higher levels of performance.

At the state level, however, males outperformed females in all content areas except algebra and functions in eight states. In one state—Hawaii—girls had higher average scores than boys, however.

Three 8th-Grade Courses

In analyzing the separate content areas tested, the study found that the school curriculum emphasizes arithmetic facts and procedures, and the results reflect that emphasis.

Among 4th graders, it found, students' proficiency was highest in measurement, while 8th graders tended to perform best on numbers and operations.

But, it notes, in each content area, 12th graders' performance was more similar to that of 8th graders than 8th graders' was of 4th graders. Such results suggest that, "as presently configured, the mathematics curriculum facilitates more learning in the lower grades," the report states.

In surveying teachers and students, the study also notes that there were significant differences in curricular content at the 8th-grade level.

Some 58 percent of the 8th graders were enrolled in 8th-grade mathematics, which tended to focus on numbers and operations, 22 percent were in pre-algebra, and 16 percent were taking algebra. Those in the more advanced classes tended to have higher levels of proficiency on the assessment, the report notes.

However, the study also found considerable variability among states. For example, the District of Columbia, which had the highest proportion of 8th graders enrolled in algebra—32 percent—had among the lowest overall performance among the states, while North Dakota, one of the highest-performing states, had one of the lowest proportions—8 percent—of students in algebra.

The overall findings suggest that schools may be denying lower-ability students the opportunity to learn more challenging material, said John A. Dossey, a professor of mathematics at Illinois State University and a former president of the N.C.T.M.

"You might think low-ability students need more work on numbers," he said. "But the math curriculum in the middle grades should provide a bridge between arithmetic thinking and algebraic thinking."

Schools provide "an opportunity to cross that bridge differentially," he said.

Traditional Teaching

Mr. Dossey also noted that, while only a fourth of 4th graders are assigned to classes on the basis of their ability, two-thirds of the 8th graders are in such classes, and those who are achieved at a "significantly higher level."

Differences in instructional practices also favor high-achieving students, noted Ina V.S. Mullis, deputy director of NAEP.

High-ability students were more likely than low-ability students to use calculators, she noted, while poorer performers tended more than higher achievers to use worksheets.

Nevertheless, she pointed out, the use of innovative strategies—such as group work, reports and projects, and calculators and computers—are relatively rare. Three-fifths of the 4th graders, three-fourths of the 8th graders, and four-fifths of the 12th graders, for example, said they used a textbook daily in math class, the study notes.

"Many teachers are still using the same instructional procedures their teachers did, and their teachers before them," Ms. Mullis said.

However, the report found that math teachers are generally well qualified. On average, teachers had some 14 years' experience teaching math, it found, and two-thirds had the highest level of certification. Two-fifths of the 8th graders, moreover, were taught by teachers who had majored in math in college, and those students outperformed those taught by teachers who majored in education or another subject.

The study also found that:

- In all states, no more than a third of students were in classrooms where teachers reported receiving all the necessary resources. Those who were in such classrooms outperformed those in less-well-stocked schools, it found.
- Students in most states generally liked math, and those who reported more interest in the subject tended to perform better.

However, the study notes that the District of Columbia, one of the lowest performers, had the highest proportion—32 percent—of students who strongly agreed that they liked the subject, as well as the most students who said they were good at it.

To order a copy of the overview report, "The State of Mathematics Achievement," write: Education Information Branch, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Education Department, 555 New Jersey Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20208-5641; telephone, (800) 424-1616.

Copies of state reports are available from the state departments of education in participating states.

8th Grade Math Proficiency, By State

State	Average Proficiency
Alabama	252 (1.2)
Arizona	259 (1.2)
Arkansas	256 (0.9)
California	256 (1.3)
Colorado	267 (1.0)
Connecticut	270 (1.1)
Delaware	261 (0.7)
District of Columbia	231 (0.7)
Florida	255 (1.2)
Georgia	258 (1.3)
Hawaii	251 (0.6)
Idaho	272 (0.7)
Illinois	260 (1.7)
Indiana	267 (1.1)
Iowa	278 (1.0)
Kentucky	256 (1.1)
Louisiana	246 (1.2)
Maryland	260 (1.4)
Michigan	264 (1.1)
Minnesota	276 (0.9)
Montana	280 (0.6)
Nebraska	276 (0.9)
New Hampshire	273 (0.9)
New Jersey	269 (1.0)
New Mexico	256 (0.8)
New York	261 (1.3)
North Carolina	250 (1.0)
North Dakota	281 (1.2)
Ohio	264 (1.0)
Oklahoma	263 (1.2)
Oregon	271 (1.0)
Pennsylvania	266 (1.6)
Rhode Island	260 (0.5)
Texas	258 (1.3)
Virginia	264 (1.5)
West Virginia	256 (0.9)
Wisconsin	274 (1.3)
Wyoming	272 (0.6)
Territories	
Guam	231 (0.6)
Virgin Islands	218 (0.5)
U.S. Average	**261 (1.4)**

Margin of error in parentheses

Source: National Assessment of Educational Progress.

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